

Halloween Festival Raises Money for Good Cause

By Sandra Tansley

Witches, scarecrows, pirates and cats, were seen walking the halls at the DMV.

Employees celebrated the first annual Halloween Harvest Festival at the Rowland State Government Center on Friday, Oct. 28. Event organizers were Maureen Doyle, of Legal Services, Cindy George, of Human Resources, Catherine Dell'Oro, of Audit Services, and Barbara Gough and Gina Gianni, of the Commissioner's Office.

"We wanted to raise money for the Charitable Giving Campaign and at the same time, have a lot of fun doing it," said Cindy.

This year, Deputy Commissioner Anthony Portanova is the coordinator of the campaign, and he was extremely

pleased with the support and participation of the employees.

"We have a very fine group of people here who really care and are very generous," Deputy Commissioner Portanova said.

The day started off with a bake sale organized by Gina. Delicious pies, cakes, brownies, cookies and other home-made pastries were made by DMV employees and sold at the bake sale.

"I want to thank everyone who baked for this sale," Gina said. "I know everyone is so busy, but yet they took the time to help out."

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■ Commissioner's Column

Governor's Annual Care & Share Program

On Nov. 14 we began our annual food drive for the Governor's Care & Share program. It runs until Dec. 9, with contributions going to Foodshare, Inc. and the CT Food Bank. Throughout our state, hundreds of people each day face a crisis in wondering where to get food, clothing and shelter. While we may only see these individuals and families occasionally in news stories on television or radio or in newspapers, their plight is part of their everyday existence. Some get beyond their situation in days or weeks, but

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■ A Day in the Life of...

Old Saybrook: It's a Small Office and They Love it

By Ernie Bertoth

Smaller is better in Old Saybrook. Just ask the DMV employees who work there.

Little things can make a big difference in a day, especially in the DMV's Old Saybrook Office.

It's a relatively small branch office, yet Old Saybrook employees say they like it that way. It promotes an upbeat feeling among the staff - a family-like feeling. There's a close and

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Bob Ferguson, left, and Andy Saltus, both of the Old Saybrook office analyze a customer's document during a recent afternoon.

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others could struggle for basic necessities for months and years.

There is no doubt that any variety of personal problems contribute to their situation. As we know from our own problems, handling them is as unique as the personalities we have. Yet, those of us with good fortune need to consider: What can we do to help those who struggle daily without basic needs and no way to fulfill them?

The Care & Share program gives each of us that chance to reach out. Canned tuna, meat and vegetables, instant potatoes, sugar-free and low sodium products, dried beans, macaroni and cheese, pasta and rice, peanut butter, beef stew, canned fruit, and cereal and oatmeal are needed. Shampoo, toothpaste, diapers, deodorant, detergents, brushes and shaving cream are also in demand.

Of course, donations of money are always accepted. They are tax deductible and any amount helps to build the purchasing power for these two sponsoring organizations. Checks should be made out to Foodshare, Inc. or CT Food Bank. I'd like to see us make a significant increase in our contributions of food and money compared to last year. Thanks for thinking of these less fortunate citizens and neighbors. Here at the DMV, Eileen Bloch, of Administrative Hearings, and Lynette Arruda, of Insurance Compliance, are coordinating our contributions. Collection boxes have been placed in units

throughout the agency. Please contact Eileen or Lynette with any questions.

The good works of our department continue in a variety of ways. John Campbell of the Old Saybrook Branch Office recently assisted a customer with removing a hard-to-get-off front license plate after the customer received new plates. The rear plate had been clipped for its registration sticker. "This is to express my thanks and commend for praise... it was most kind of John," the customer wrote.

A Meriden attorney wrote to praise Nancy Klemonski of the Insurance Compliance Division for helping him to prove that a client's identity had been stolen and wrongfully used. "Ms. Klemonski went above and beyond the call of duty and you should be proud to have an employee of this caliber working for the DMV," the attorney wrote in a letter.

The quick thinking of a telephone center employee earned him praise from the son of an elderly customer who needed the help of a family member to solve the DMV problem. The agent contacted a relative of the elderly customer and gave assistance immediately. "I, obviously, am thankful he went the extra mile in the name of excellent customer service," the relative wrote to me.

And, yes, that's what working with our customers is all about. Excellent customer service is something we want for ourselves and should provide without a second thought.



Commissioner Ralph J. Carpenter



First Annual Chili and Bake-Off a Hit

By Marj Knecht

Staff impatiently awaited the judges' decisions about who deserved the first prize for best chili and best cake in the first annual "Chili and Bake-Off Contest," which took place on Oct. 27 in Wethersfield. As it happened, the first prize award of \$50 in each category went to the same person, Jennifer Pelletier, of the Wethersfield Branch Office. Congratulations Jennifer!

Following the judging, employees eagerly purchased and consumed chili and desserts for \$1 per serving from which the Employee Recognition Committee realized a profit of \$36. This event proved so popular that the ERC intends to launch a similar type of food contest soon.

The ERC wants you to mark your calendar for Nov. 29, which is the kick-off date for the sale of Butter Braided Breads, which will arrive just in time for the holidays.

As always, Entertainment Books containing discount coupons for area restaurants and other service establishments may be obtained by contacting Michele Walden and Holly Cote.

The ERC extends its best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving to all agency personnel and their families and its deepest gratitude to all DMV employees who so generously support its activities.

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Corporate and Public Relations

We would like to welcome back Ernie Bertothy to the Corporate and Public Relations Unit. It's great to have you back! Ernie will be taking over the correspondence duties that Dina Ungiechajer formerly did for the Commissioner. Divisions will be hearing from Ernie shortly!

Document Integrity Unit

The Document Integrity Unit has had several employees who returned to the agency under the Retire/Rehire Program over the past few months. They would like to welcome Robert (Bob) Klaneski and Jeanne Stevens, who were formerly part of the Title Division; Deborah Holloway, Sharon Nelson and Gerard (JR) Raby from the Wethersfield Branch and Carmen Jordan who worked in the Willimantic Branch and in the Dealer and Repair Division. Their days are now enlightened with bankers' boxes and R-229s. To keep their energy and spirits up, they plan an occasional potluck lunch. Welcome back!

To help the DIU develop the new facial recognition technology, they added two additional members to their team from the State Police Retire/Rehire Program. We welcome Charles (Charlie) Revoir and Richard Wheeler.

Enfield Office

Agent Bruce Singer has recently been appointed Supervisor Agent at the Enfield Branch. Congratulations to Bruce!

In July, Carla Cerniglia transferred to Enfield Branch and we hope to keep her for a long time. She is a definite plus for us.

We also have a new maintainer, Steve Gagliardi. Welcome aboard Steve! We're ecstatic to work with you!!

Big ticket purchases have been on the rise at the Enfield Office. Chris Hopkins and Bruce both bought new trucks and Ed Nelson purchased a home on a lake. Congratulations to all of you!

Human Resources

"The Wizard of Oz" was the H.R. costume theme for the Oct. 28, Halloween Harvest Party in Waterbury. Within two days, employees volunteered or were assigned their characters. Costumes were bought or created to bring the characters to life. The cast of characters were: Tammy Grella was Dorothy, Lucy Manente was the Wicked Witch of the West, Carol Moriarty was Glinda, the Good Witch, Lillian Lopez was the Witch of the East a.k.a. The Dead Witch, Cindy George was the Scarecrow, Anthony Webb was the Tin Man, Tiffany Joyner was the Cowardly Lion, and Phillippia Fletcher-DeNovellis was Auntie Em. The Payroll Unit participated by being residents of "The Land of Oz" and dressed colorfully. Everyone had fun and a few laughs while attending to their jobs that day. Thank you ERC for a great day!

Norwich Office

Michael Jacobson is the proud father of a new baby boy! Ethan was born Nov. 5, and weighed 8 pounds 10 ounces. Congratulations to Michael and his wife!

Also, Christine St. Onge's husband finally came home after a long stint overseas, welcome back!

Around The Agency

A Letter from Agent Sandra Wells

As everyone knows at the end of August, Hurricane Katrina hit and destroyed much of Louisiana. Everyone was hearing about New Orleans and very little about the

small towns that were completely wiped out by the disaster. On the morning of Sept. 6, I approached my fellow co-workers in the Norwich Office. I told them about a close friend who lost everything in the hurricane, but never did she or her husband consider themselves victims. My friends were volunteering at the shelters and helping with the clean up. I decided to tell my co-workers on Tuesday morning that a mobile home, purchased by the family was leaving Wednesday night for Louisiana. I also asked if anyone could bring in some much needed supplies (books, toys, teddies and other things that the evacuees had to leave behind during the hurricane), that we would make sure these items made their way to the camper, and then to the shelter. When I arrived at work Wednesday morning, I was completely surprised to see a lot of friends (co-workers) opening their cars, trucks and their hearts. They filled the back of my Explorer. Even with the back seat down, it was overflowing. I had to have someone bring a pick-up truck with an eight-foot bed and even that was filled in minutes. I knew I worked with great people but I now know they are more than just great. My co-workers are the most caring, giving and loving people. They heard about people in need and without consideration they put forth all their time and effort to help. And this company should be very proud and honored of the Norwich DMV office and their unselfish ways.

*Thank you to the Norwich DMV,
Agent Sandra Wells*

Wethersfield Office

We would like to wish farewell to our friend and co-worker, Sheryle Lohbush, who has left the DMV to pursue a position with Public Works. Although we were sad to see her go, we do wish her the best of luck with her new endeavor. We will miss you!

We would like to congratulate our very own Jennifer Pelletier on winning both the First Annual Chili Contest and Bakeoff in Wethersfield. Now we all know who to go to for our catering!! Way to go Jen! Jen has also been very busy coordinating a bus trip to beautiful New York City. It is a great chance to go skating, catch a show or get a little Christmas shopping done with some friends. The trip is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 4 and the cost is \$35 per person. Call Jen by Nov. 18 for details and to reserve your seat.

Also, anyone looking for a special gift for Heather Zace for Christmas, may I suggest oars for her car! Something she would not buy for herself but could certainly use!

Wethersfield Branch's thought for the month: If you clean your windows, be sure to put stickers on them. You never know who might run into them!

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Halloween Harvest Festival

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Streams of people could be seen with plates full of baked goods during the morning. A “make your lunch” buffet was offered where employees could make their own sandwiches, choosing from an array of luncheon meats, cheeses, salads, condiments and chips. The line was so long at one time, people had to come back, but unfortunately, the food sold out.

Catherine had a lot of fun and hoped that everyone else did as well. “It was so rewarding to see all the support by the DMV employees for such an important cause,” she said.

After lunch, there was the judging of the costumes. The Human Resources Department won for best theme, “The Wizard of Oz.” Cutest costume went to Cindy, as the Scarecrow. Best overall costume went to Carol Moriarty, of Human Resources, who was Glenda, the Good Witch, in “The Wizard of Oz” and most original costume, went to Magaly D’Amato, of the Commissioner’s Office, who was dressed as a pirate.

The festivities continued with a scavenger hunt where the third floor employees faced off with the fourth floor employees to find a list of items in a limited amount of time. Third floor team captain, Magaly, led her team to victory, just narrowly beating the fourth floor employees, led by team captain, Cheryl McCann, of the Emissions Division. The



Human Resources dressed as “The Wizard of Oz” characters. From left to right Anthony Webb, Tammy Grella, Carol Moriarty, Phillippia Fletcher-DeNovellis, Tiffany Joyner, Lucy Manente and Cindy George.

winners received a huge basket of Halloween treats and all of the members were given Halloween candles for being such good sports.

Maureen was very happy with the overall turnout, “I want to thank everyone who participated in this event,” she said. “Hopefully, we will try and outdo ourselves next year. In fact, if you thought the costumes were good this year, just wait until next year.”

Anne Nardoza, of Branch Operations, provided a beautiful, pumpkin floral centerpiece, which was absolutely breathtaking. This centerpiece was also one of the many items donated by employees for a drawing.

There were also handmade birdhouses, scented Yankee Candles, Juicy Couture accessories, a video and other Halloween items.

Barbara reported that a total of \$544.00 has been raised to date. There is still the drawing for “Kenny Rogers” tickets, which will take place on Nov. 30. The cost is \$5.00 and tickets are still available. The concert is scheduled for Dec. 21 at the Palace Theater in Waterbury.

“This whole event was a huge success and we raised a lot of money,” Barbara said. “We still have until Nov. 30 to raise more money with this drawing.”

Deputy Commissioner Portanova extended “a big – Thanks to Everyone! Without everyone’s help, enthusiasm and energy, none of this would have been possible!”

Around The Agency

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Winsted Office

Happy belated October birthdays to Heidi Holtman and Deborah Dailey. Congratulations to Carol Hoebel and her husband on the new addition to their family, a 4-month-old Maltese puppy, who is a bundle of joy and energy! We are happy to hear that your three cats are very accepting of this new addition!

Also, congratulations go out to Agent Joe Pelletier’s daughter, who was married in October.

Good Luck to Dina Ungiechajer, who left the DMV on Nov. 17 after 16 years of service. She will be working at her husband’s business, Advanced Mechanical Services. Before Dina worked in the Commissioner’s Office, she was a member of the Dealer and Repairers Unit and the former License Coordination Office. She will be greatly missed!

H.R. Thought You Should Know

DMV Employees Ask About the Employee Assistance Program:

Q. I want to be open, but am worried about what the employee assistance professional might think of me or record in his or her notes during my session. I know the EAP is confidential, but I am still concerned. Should I be?

A. Employee assistance professionals obtain only the information necessary to assist clients. All references and information that are not related to the issue at hand will not be used. EA professionals recognize the value and uniqueness of all persons. Therefore, being “judged” or criticized is not part of the EAP assessment process.

Smaller is Better in Old Saybrook

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comfortable sense of togetherness, they say.

"It's just like you were in a family," said Kelly Getty, a member of the Old Saybrook Office, to describe the atmosphere of the office. "We have to depend on each other."

Kathy Ely agrees with Kelly.

"We're close to each other and we interact with each other," said Kathy. "We rely on each other."

For instance, Liz Grendziszewski, who has been with the agency less than a year, looks for guidance from time-to-time. On a recent Wednesday afternoon, Liz faced a perplexing registration issue and approached Kelly for support.

Kelly, an 18-year DMV employee, did not hesitate to assist. A minute later, the matter was resolved.

"Everybody is helpful," said Liz. "I can ask anybody and they will help."

Even though small, the office can have trying times in the summer months. Its proximity to the Long Island Sound and Connecticut River makes it the "capital" for boat registrations.

During one week last June, the office had 268 boating registration transactions, the peak weekly number for the season, branch manger Marilyn Quayle said. Other weeks during the same month indicated 267 and 247 registrations of the same kind, in addition to all other transactions a full-service branch processes.

The summer spurt of business tests the group from Old Saybrook. In fact, it pulls this team of employees together.

"We definitely have to work together as a team," Terri Lirette said.

Its location along the water has ever-present reminders. Mural paintings and framed photos of an ocean line the walls. In them a miniature red-and-white-stripped lighthouse, sailboat or school of fish make the ocean part of the office.

"It gives the office a whole nautical theme," said Kelly.

But sometimes, the ocean theme gives way to holiday decorating. John Campbell, the office's maintainer, usually heads up that effort.

His latest masterpiece came during the weeks around Halloween. Soon he will begin preparing for his next chal-

lenge: the holiday season.

John said he is still thinking of different ideas to spruce up the office. And he'll be enlisting the help of others there.

This office finds its success from each other, said Marilyn.

"Everybody works well together," added Marilyn, who just celebrated her 25th anniversary at DMV. "This is a really great group and a pleasant office."

Perhaps Theresa Stopa said it best about the key characteristic of the Old Saybrook Branch Office.

"Everyone is very supportive," said Theresa. "There's a supportive atmosphere, that's the biggest thing."



Old Saybrook Branch Manager Marilyn Quayle, far right organizes a small staff meeting also pictured, from the left are Kelly Getty, Theresa Stopa, Rachel Young and Diane Conradi.

■ Tales of Customer Service

DMV Employees Give Back to Veterans

By Kelly Manning

Thinking of veterans happens more often than on Veteran's Day.

Several DMV employees recently reached out to help a number of veterans at the Rocky Hill State Veterans' Home.

While we all had Nov. 11 off of work to honor the men and woman who sacrificed their lives for our freedom, on Sept. 30, the DMV brought personnel from Driver Services and Branch Operations to help veterans with some licensing needs at Stand Down 2005, which was sponsored by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Employees from the Driver Services Unit reviewed about 200 driving history records and were able to restore about 50 suspended licenses.

The DMV photo license bus also changed its route for the day to help renew drivers' licenses and answer any questions the veterans posed. Twenty-five veterans were able to renew their license that same day.

"It makes you feel good to help someone who has much

less than some of us," Sue Atkinson, of Driver Services, said. "The veterans we couldn't restore were given all of the requirements on what they need to do to become eligible. It was an overwhelming and positive experience just to get them started."

Forty-five state, federal and private agencies provided almost 500 veterans, who were bused in from all over the state, with their services and resources at Stand Down 2005.

"The cooperation from all of the participating agencies was amazing," said Stand Down 2005 Coordinator Maria Cheney, from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. "Everyone enjoyed providing assistance to these veterans."

DMV Employees who worked one-on-one with the veterans, answering questions and providing assistance included, Brian Clarke, Deborah Mayer, Jim DeNigris, Terry Zeiler, LouAnne Flores, Kathy Flanagan-Beal and Sue, all

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DMV Employees Help Veterans

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of Driver Services, as well as Eugene Bove, of the Wethersfield Branch, Joel Karabeinikoff, of the New Britain Branch, Peter Gruener, of the Hamden Branch and Mary Lynch, of the Rowland Government Center in Waterbury. In addition, Beth Kleina, of IST, helped make the day a success by setting up all of the DMV's equipment.

"It was really rewarding," Brian said. "It gives you a sense of giving back a little bit to veterans, who were all very appreciative."

Veterans had access to everything from the Labor Department, where they searched for job openings, to the Judicial Courts, where over 100 cases were seen, to telephones, where veterans called loved ones.



"Stand Down is a way to reach out to veterans who are homeless and who might not have access to all of these resources," Maria said. "It is a one-stop shop."

When the clock struck 3 p.m., veterans piled back onto the buses on which they arrived, stocked with clothing and food, nicely trimmed hair and some even had a

renewed driver's license.

"It was great to be able to help someone who really needed it," said Deborah.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs hopes to continue providing assistance to veterans next year.

"We are already talking about Stand Down 2006," Maria concluded.

■ Off-Beat Feature

Joe's Restoration of Lawn Tractors is No Easy Task

By Andy Munson

Joe Cunningham is more than just a Sergeant in the Dealer and Repairer Unit at the DMV. He has a deep passion for restoring antique Wheel Horse lawn tractors.

He finds them, breaks them down and completely rebuilds the machines until they are in their original showroom condition.

This is no easy task.

Most of his original machines, some nearly 50-years-old, have been neglected for decades. The availability of original parts is sparse and it often requires a lot of detective work to locate them.

The history of the Wheel Horse company began in 1946 when Elmer Pond and his son, Cecil, designed and built what became the first Wheel Horse lawn tractor in their one-car Indiana garage. At this time, they probably didn't know that their legacy would be carried on by a nationwide network of hobbyists over half a century later.

The company got its name when the father and son team decided to produce machines that worked like the horses they were replacing, but with wheels. Wheel Horse remained among the highest quality and most durable machines.

The way Joe began this hobby has a striking parallel to the Pond story. His son, Brent, told his father that he'd like to get a Wheel Horse lawn tractor. They decided that instead of buying one outright, they would find an old one and restore it.

They located a 1962 model RJ-58 that was almost completely buried in a yard.

"It was completely rusted, moving parts were locked-up and the engine was seized," Joe said.

They took the hulk of metal to their Middlefield home and began work. After a year and a half, countless hours of meticulous work and quests for rare parts, the project was completed.

"When we were done it looked like a brand new model on the dealer's floor, you wouldn't have known it was 30 years old," he added.

Since then, Joe's two sons' interest in the machines has waned while his has just increased. He's restored six more mowers made from the 1950s through the 1970s that were in similar states of disrepair.

When time allows, he displays them at local fairs and shows. However, the endeavor is more of a form of therapy than anything else right now. When Joe looks at a rusted wreck of a machine that most people would call scrap metal, "I see a completely restored tractor," he said. Looking at the finished products compared to how he finds them you can tell he really does see things that way.

Joe currently has one tractor awaiting restoration and is active in looking for new projects as well as helping others with theirs. "There's a huge network of collectors who all talk on the internet and meet at shows," he explained.

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Sgt. Joe Cunningham of the Dealers and Repairers unit drives one of his restored antique lawn tractors.

Restoring Antique Lawn Tractors

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"We'll trade parts or give each other leads on where to find the ones we need. It's really amazing just how many people collect these things."

While Joe has restored other brands of tractors and cars for people, his key interest remains in the Wheel Horse.

"They were the first true riding mower and had more attachments and durability than any other," he said. "I still use an early 1970s model with a dozer blade on it for landscaping, digging and snow plowing. When you look at these machines they are very crude in a way. Every part is made to perfectly carry out the task it's designed for. Sometimes it isn't pretty but it's always perfect and you can tell it was designed by people who knew what they



A 1961 Wheel Horse lawn tractor before Restoration.



The 1961 Wheel Horse lawn tractor after restoration.

were doing-not by computers."

Joe's interest in these wheeled horses will likely be with him for a long while. After a recent show in Pennsylvania, he was approached by another collector who asked him to restore a tractor. Joe is thinking about it too.

"If I retire, this could be something I start doing more seriously," Joe said. "I love the work and the search for original parts and it's something I can make my own schedule with."

Considering the time, money and effort put into restoring his own stable of machines, it would probably be nice to do the thing he enjoys *and* get paid for it.

■ Unsung Heroes of DMV

Solving Computer-Related Problems with a Little Humor

By Ernie Bertothy

Steve Cochran is a one-man IT show. And he gets rave reviews!

Steve is the go-to guy for technology assistance at the Rowland Government Center. He not only fixes computer problems, but also generates a grin or two along the way.

While his main "act" is supporting the agency's staff with all computer-related problems, his signature performances include timely help and a little bit of humor. He supports two floors in the Waterbury Office and uses his funny side to turn a frustrating computer issue into a pleasant experience.

"We have to joke around to keep things light," explained Steve, now in his 12th year at the DMV. "Otherwise, people are going to pull their hair out over a (computer) problem."

On a typical day, Steve travels from one desk to another between the third and fourth floors. As the Help Desk's only point-person at this location, he rarely has a dull

moment – he prefers an up-beat feel at the office.

Steve likes working with his co-workers so much that he's developed an award just for them. The honor, called "The Tech Support Customer of the Month Award," is given to staff members who have the most humorous tech support experiences with Steve.

While the award is meant in jest, it illustrates Steve's most endearing characteristic – his sense of humor. He provides more than service with a smile, sometimes he induces a laugh too.

Phillippia Fletcher-DeNovellis, of Human Resources, has called Steve so many times, he has made her speed-dial list. Phillippia said when she places a call to him, Steve sees her name on the caller ID and he answers the phone with a brief response: "I'll be right there."

The response always produces a chuckle, she said.

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The Rowland Center's One-Man IT Show

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Cindy George, of Human Resources, has made plenty of calls to Steve looking for some PC assistance. Steve said Cindy was the first recipient of his award, and she appreciated its comedic value.

"Steve is very creative and makes the workplace fun," Cindy said. "(The award) was hilarious."

Cindy posted the award near her desk and soon other employees began to observe Cochran's cheerful disposition. In fact, co-workers wanted to know when the next award would be issued.

"A lot of people began to ask me, 'How come I didn't get one,'" said Steve, who has worked at the RSGC for the DMV since it opened. "That's pretty much how it started."

Steve takes great care in aiding his fellow employees. Phillippia recalled an experience that sums up Steve's approach to the job.

She had been straining her eyes to read the small icons on her desktop and asked Steve if anything could be done. He came to her desk almost immediately, and enlarged the icons, Phillippia said.

"He makes you feel, at that moment, that you're the most important person," added Phillippia, another recipient of Steve's award.

Steve says his personality helps with every situation.

"The biggest thing for me is working with the people," he said.

In an effort to maximize his time at the office, Steve said he both repairs the problems and teaches employees how to avoid them.

"I like to show people what to do," he said. "In case something happens again, they can assist themselves."

Steve Shonta, the agency's personnel administrator, had a situation that sums up Cochran's valuable service. Shonta remembered a time when his PC crashed and he seemingly lost all of his information, however Cochran came to the rescue and recovered some of the data.

"He's only one guy, but he's always there for you," Shonta said.



Steve Cochran of IST is the go-to guy for technology assistance at the Rowland Government Center.

Adopt a Family This Holiday Season

By Kelly Manning

This year it's double the help.

For more than five years one needy family during the holiday season has benefited from the generosity of staff in the Driver Services Unit, which is part of the Bureau of Standards, Integrity and Training. With the entire bureau's help, two families this year will be adopted.

"It is a great feeling when you help someone less fortunate at a time of the year when they really need it," Krystyna Jablonecki, of Driver Services, said.

The Salvation Army has provided an anonymous synopsis of each family with a list of items they are asking for. Each item on the list is written on a card and posted on the wall in the Driver Services break room for employees to take and purchase.

"Most of us have everything we need," Sue Atkinson, of Driver Services, said. "So instead of doing a gift exchange within the department, we felt we could give gifts to families who actually need them."

For some employees it is a way of giving back. "When my mother died, someone picked our family to help us out," Theresa Ellison, of Driver Services, said.

Any employees interested in participating are welcome to visit the Driver Services Unit to choose an item they wish to purchase for one of the families. All gifts must be brought to the Driver Services Unit by Dec. 8. Departments are also welcome to contact the Salvation Army at (860) 543-8413 and help another family in need.

"I encourage other departments to adopt a family on their own," Kathy Flanagan-Beal, of Driver Services, said. "It is such a great feeling to help someone during the holidays."